An Inaugural Thesis

on

Mania à Potu

by

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of
Washington City, District of Columbia.

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R. E. Kerr.

To reprobate the pernicious use of Ardent Spirits extensively indulged would merely be repeating the judicious admonitions of a number of the wise. So infatuated are the votaries of the poisonous draught, that deaf to counsel they heedlessly indulge their depraved desires and ultimately meet their ruin in what they most delighted. Prevailing in every Country under the specious appearance of balmy relief from the cares and vexations of worldly pursuits, do we find an unconquerable thirst for stimulation and exhilaration. Mahomet's laws do not protect its subjects from the practice of inebriation, for the Turks asuage the pains and ills of life, fire their flagging Zeal and raise the powers

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of mind and body above their natural standard by the continual liberal substitute of Opium. Another preparation is recurred to in order to inspire enlivening joy and extacy of mirth and also to avoid infringement of their prophet's rules, which they effect by the leaves and seeds of hemp, denominated bangue. The consequen=ces of either practice are equally pernicious, and subject the system to a numerous train of diseases which will eventually curtail the span of human existence. The consumption of Ardent Spirits in the United States is increasing to an alarming extent, and disor=ders of the human frame will always attend pari passu the increase or diminution of the use of spirituous liquors. The immediate effect of those potations is an exhilaration of spirit, attended with increased muscular excitement and sensorial energy; unusual vivacity of mind is evinced; the shackles of grief are unloosed; and

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unbridled mirth loquaciously exults at the downfal of ennui; the action of the heart and arteries is much accelerated, the face and eyes become suffused by vessels which before were destined for the convey=ance of lymph, receiving red blood. Increasing confidence assumes the stead of modesty and self opinionated merit is magnified into impor=tance. If the quantity of spirit is inordinate the effect is much extenuated and intoxication is the consequence. This debased situation is too familiar to be described and deservedly receives the execrations of the virtuous. Every degree of stimulation in the same manner by creating an excitement and increasing the natural actions of the system, oce=asions an unusual expenditure of nervous influ=ence and consequently tends ultimately to produce a debilitated state. The very great sympathy exis=ting between the stomach and the brain, arising from the extensive nervous connection, also parti=cipates in the production of this altered and tor=

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and arteries, occasioned by the stimulating nature
of the draught, impels a greater quantity of blood
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that organ, which contributes in producing the
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the call for nervous energy, and so inordinate
the supply afforded by the sensorium, that in=
=capable to support the extravagance of the system,
as soon as the stimulating power of the draught
is expended, the whole frame is left debilitated
and time and inaction are required before the
powers of the constitution can reinstate it to its
previously natural standard. Though frequently
an intoxicating fit fortunately terminates in the
way described, by the gradual accumulation of
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its prostrated state, which is the indirect debility of Brown, still by a frequent repetition of the habit of inebriation, the constitution fails to withstand the imposition and is unable so felicitously to restore the injured state of health. Participaters in debauching frolicks too well remember their disagreable sensations on the succeeding morning. Often are they aroused even before day with eagerness to satiate a thirst almost unquenchable; frequently they dream of pleasant and delicious draughts, the gurgling rivulet and purling spring. When they awake they realise the consequence of last nights indulgence. A violent and distressing head ache is among the first to indicate the injury the system has sustained. Sluggishness of motion with murkiness of mind combine to render evident the struggle which exists between strength of constitution and invasive effects of their pernicious practice. The more frequent the repetition of dissipated indulgence, the more serious are consequences, untill

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at length the system strikes the flag and yields to its relentless enemy. But it is to aid the yet uncon=quered but contending state that medical assis=tance is required and when evidences are first given of infirmity's superiour strength. Then suc=ceeds the disease which is the subject of this essay and which has received the appellation of Mania à Potu. The scarcity of writings on this subject deserving of att=ention is unaccountably ~~great~~ which is especially the more surprising as the disease is one of frequent occurrence. Two or three days after a debauch the patient is much inconvened with chilliness, pain in the head, indigestion, sickness at stomach and frequent att=empts at vomiting, there is a peculiar expression of countenance always attending and an alarmed or wild glaring of the eyes; his thirst is excessive with an unyielding state of the bowels; his pulse is such as has been frequently mistaken to denote infl=ammatory action but so erroneous is the practice necessarily deduced from that impression that it

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demands peculiar attention; it is full, seeming strong and always I believe compressible, which beyond all doubt evinces the nature of the case, for the ease with which it is compressed informs of the weakness of the action. He becomes extremely restless and is incapable of remaining stationary or fixing his attention steadily for any length of time on any single object. His limbs acquire a habit of trembling which bears some resemblance to the effects of an ague and has occasioned the disease to be variously named. By some it has been called Mania à Temulentia, Febris Temulenta, Delirium Tremens &c. This convulsive action of the muscles is exceedingly irregular and frequently excites alarm; the extent to which it at times is carried adds so inordinately to his strength as to defeat the strenuous endeavours of two or three persons to retain him; the exertion is but momentary and is succeeded by a corresponding stage of great debility. The skin sometimes preserves its natural temperature but generally is hot and dry, nevertheless it is

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variable and sometimes moist. The face becomes suffused; the pulsations of the carotids generally increase and the patient complains of intolerable pain in the head. The symptoms go on gradually exacerbating and the patients mind becomes remarkably affected. From the commencement a confusion of ideas and indistinctness of conception now and then present themselves; he is usually in much distress from his ill directed apprehensions, and muttering to himself explains the causelys fear. The insanability of mind, or rather the disordered faculty of association in fine becomes more manifest and those delusions much more frequently mislead him. Often through the night he is perfectly delirious but in the day much more composed; this partial state in fine submits to a more permanent delirium. His speech is wild, incoherent and unconnected, but most frequently he insist upon the verity of his vagrant stories and tells them with apparent plausibility. His imagination never rests but always

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on the wing engaging and absorbing his attention allows no ease but perplexes and disturbs him. Led by illusive flights of fancy, he conceives the most erroneous and wild conjectures; he imagines that the floor of his apartment is bestrewed with gold and consequently saunters round the room continually stooping to collect the scattered pieces. Now he conceives that someone has offended him and he either reproaches with the most opprobrious epithets the airy object of his contumely, or pugilistically repays the wall for its supposed insulting language. Again his ill conditioned fancy conjures up a thousand frightful scenes and uses his endeavours to avoid them. He supposes that his room is all in flames and is anxious to escape the conflagration; he pertinaciously insists on leaving the apartment, but if detained by his attendant immediately defames the fell decree that would devote him to destruction. Mostly however he is mild and submissive to his keeper, not indulging in perverseness or contrariety

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of conduct but subordinate to his injunctions. The general tenor of behaviour appears to be interspersed by penitence, contrition and passive submission, evincing a perfect consciousness of impropriety of conduct in intoxication. The picture as thus drawn affords ample matter for reflection and might advantageously be turned to the suppression of the vice. How melancholy is the fact that the noblest gift to man should be subverted and destroyed by the obstinate indulgence of potations whose excessive use is always injudicious and uniformily receives the stigma of disgrace. The period of usual continuation of this mania is irregular and is generally four or five days, but may attend much longer; the greater the delay in producing convalescence the more difficult will be the prevention of morbid associations of ideas and restoration of the capacity of the sensorium to receive correct impressions of the senses. The prognostics in this disease will be derived from the aggravation of the symptoms and attendant cir-

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-cumstances. The trembling disposition uniformily attend-ing the complaint becoming inordinately increased; the anxiety and restlepness unusual in degree; the low-ness of temperature of the surface with cold, clammy perspiration; Hypocratic countenance and subsultus tendinum; prepage unfavourably as to its termination. Appearances post mortem are what would be expec-ted. The stomach is inflamed in which the neighbou-ring viscera participate; if the victim had been ha-bitual in the practice of intoxication it is often found much thickened and considerably indurated; the brain is exceedingly congested with effusions frequ-ently of serum in the lateral ventricles; the viscera of the abdomen I have likewise found surrounded by a quantity of water; and the liver, like the brain is exceedingly turgid as would naturally be supposed from its extensive venous system; indeed upon dis-section nothing is revealed but what would be infer-red from a knowledge of his previous habits.

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marked by no little diversity of opinion. As all enquiries into the nature of diseases are directed with a view to the improvement of the practice, so it dem-ands the most decided attention, and requires actual knowledge and experience to substantiate the method independent of the theory upon which it rests. Genius and talents upon principles of ded-uction may erect a theory whose exterior splendour will glisten with plausibility and defy even scru-tiny of argument, but the sanction of experience, unbiased by prejudice, the only fair and unequi-vocal test, must contribute its approval or it cannot be adopted with reliance or pursued with confidence. Let it not be infered that I dis-claim all rational deductions, that I reject reason and argument from Medicine. I believe that in-ferences may be drawn from facts and practice qualified accordingly; but the expansive field for a variety of theories, in the hands of capacity and genius may be perverted and distorted to meet a

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favourite remedial plan and supported by cun=ning and ingenuity may evade detection of its fal=lacy. The premises being true may lull suspicion into quiet and conceal the erroneous deduction. The propriety of bloodletting has been a theme of con=tention and Dr Potter of the University of Maryland is warm in its advocation. As the disease most generally appears it is altogether inadmissable and will induce an irretrievable state of debility and exhaustion. In a few cases where the constitution of the patient has not been imposed on by habitual drun=kenness and debauchery, and is seen by the Phy=sician in the incipiency of the disease with a pulse full, strong and not very readily compressi=ble, with unusual determination to the head, it must immediately be used and always with advantage; but the occurrence of those cases are comparatively few and a recurrence to the lancet under ordinary circumstances of the disease cannot but produce the most decided detrimental

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consequences. It is only where the strength of the system is sufficient to excite considerable reaction that venese=ction would be proper or at all admissable. When the skin is hot and dry with constipation of the bowels the propriety of procuring an alvine evacuation must be evident. The necessity in all diseases of the solubi=lity of the bowels has settled down into universal admission. To obtain this desirable end, the most efficacious and advisable method is divided portions of Calomel and Jalap. Though it is well known that patients in this disease cannot support the action of purgative medicines to any extent and that exhaustion is the consequence of perseverance in the practice, it is nevertheless essential to procure a motion and maintain a freedom, remedying the subsequent debility by the exhibition of wine whey, ~~the neutral mixture~~, Opium and the like. When an evacuation is obtained the administration of Opium and Ammonia will be demanded, for the exhaustion is considerable and attended with excessive restlessness

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The effect of this medicine is to lull the system into quietude, excite declining action and to obtain sleep, from which the patient usually awakes so astonishingly improved as to induce the most heartfelt satisfaction of the utility of the practice. The affusion of the surface with warm water in which has been dissolved a quantity of Muriate of Soda, as noticed by Dr Armstrong has in my humble opinion been too much unheeded. From the known congestion of the venous system which exists, and the certain tendency of the affusion to remove the sluggish motion of the veins by exciting them to action, most pointedly concur to recommend its use. The opium which should afterwards be used is aided also in its operation by the previous ablution. It is not in every instance that we commence the treatment with a purgative, for its immediate use is contraindicated by the feeble condition of the patient, pale and trembling features, fluttering pulse with moisture

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of the surface. In such a case we unhesitatingly resort to the use of Laudanum, hot toddy and Ammonia. Should a tranquil sleep succeed the exhibition of these articles, the same success alluded to above may be expected. The bowels must be solubly kept open maintained throughout the course of the disease by the administration of Calomel and Opium, three grains of the former to one and a half of the latter, two or three times in the twenty four hours. As the ultimatum of our wishes is only to be consummated by the action of the Opium on the system, every thing tending to impede the acquisition of sleep should be removed. But objects are not as readily obtained as described. The insusceptibility of the system is frequently so great as not to be affected even by unusual quantities of Opium. It then becomes our duty to arouse the patient from this torpid state and create susceptibility to remedial agencies by the action

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of emetics. It must be borne in mind that if exhaustion of the powers of life be very considerable, to venture on the exhibition of emetics would be hazardous to the patient. But if it be concluded to resort to them, the same cause that renders their use essential, requires them to be exhibited in an increased quantity. Rather than produce emesis by Tartras Antimonii, which requires ten grains or more to effect its purpose, and is harsh in its operation, attended with great nausea, it is much more preferable to use the combination of Ipecac: and Tarter, in the proportions of a scruple to two grains. After copious and free vomiting in which most generally a brownish glairy fluid is thrown up, the susceptibility of the system is increased and the patient much improved. So much importance is attached in the hands of some practitioners to the emetic course of treatment that their principal reliance is on it with opium. When judiciously recurred to its advantage is

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immense; it requires to be frequently repeated when it mitigates the trembling habit, commonly removes the maniacal state and substitutes tran-quility and calmness. By the operation on the bowels which the repeated exhibition of emetics invariably produces, other laxatives are dispensed with; but they cannot be made use of but in the early stage, for the improper administration in the latter course of the disease has proved destru-ctive to the patient. Of such importance is the obtaining of sleep that no exertion should be spa-red to lull the patient in the soothing arms of Morpheus. I do not recollect that there ever was an instance of recovery which had not been pre-ceeded by, or indeed which had not been attributed to sleep. It is of such magnitude as to be emphat-ically styled by Dr Chapman the "sine qua non" of recovery. The practice of exhibiting Opium, neutral mixture, wine whey &c must be pursued and by attention to the varying state of the system, the

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indications will be evident. In a few days from the commencement, either from mal management or a procrastinated call for a Physician, the Typhoid stage succeeds, wherein all the attention is required to arrest the progress of exhaustion. The dry and parched tongue, encrusted teeth, nervous tremors, burning skin and subsultus tendinum are evidence of this state, and Volatile Alkali, Camphor and brandy are liberally demanded to stay the declining system and prevent approaching dissolution. By a steady continuance and per=severance in this manner we may subvert the diseased order of actions and establish convales=cence. Even on the recovery there are what should be attended to, but nothing that can escape the eye of the careful and discerning physician. What most demands attention is a state of watchfulness which often supervenes and should be counterac=ted, as it is distressing to the patient and hurtful to his health. To arrest this morbid vigilance,

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nothing more is requisite than the exhibition of hops in tea or Hoffman's anodyne liquor. On the treatment of this disease I have summarily delivered what I believe the best adapted practice and which will prove in contending with the disorder fully equal to the cure. It is one of the many diseases to which the human frame is liable from the liberal use of spirituous liquors. A more pernicious habit no where can exist; it engenders depravity of the morals and the mind. It becomes the Medici as guardians of health to detect and expose all bane to life. A sacred duty is in them invested which should be religiously discharged. The use of Ardent Spirits is an open gate at which a train of fell diseases enter, with profanity and immorality and every vice dancing their attendance. If by a happy change from depravation and inebriation the door to Bacchanalian sports were closed and use of spirits were desisted; disorders of the human frame would be extensively cur-

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-ailed and virtuous happiness succeed the riotous dispentions of innumerable families. such a fortune-ate event is devoutly to be wished for, but little to be expected. The fatal tenacity of corrupt desires is only to be satisfied by an indulgence, and though by a continual invective of its destructive use, we may restrain it in a measure and thereby ameliorate the otherwise unbridled licentious-ness, we cannot entirely eradicate unless by time and patient exertions the growing and wide sp-reading evil. A fear that the knowledge of the remedial agency of spirits may not favourably im-press the community and that instead of deserting habits of intoxication or too liberal indulgence, ~~xxx~~ may serve to induce them more obstinately to persist, has led Dr Rush to denounce the recommen-dation and advise the popular opinion to be chec-ked by never causing its administration. If after copious expositions of the baneful tendency of the destructive article, we still perceive the immola

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=tion is continued, there remains no stain upon the conscience; fair and unsullied as the unwritten paper it may behold the ravages of obstina=cy without compunction.

Thus Gentlemen I have concluded my inaugu=ral essay, with feelings indescribable does the curtain fall upon the last exertion of a students duty. A tribunal as just as eminent will prono=unce my fate and with a confident reliance on the Fathers of my Alma Mater I anxiously await your final judgement, which will either be the morning star that fires me to emulate your glorious course, or a setting sun enshrouding me in darkness never to be dispersed. The ever memorable day on which your decision will be proclaimed is as critical to mortality, as the day of judgement, to Eternity.

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1826

Mania a Potu.

James Washington

Inaugural Dissertation

On

Mania a Potu

By

James A. Washington

of

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